GUNNER DEPEW

By

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CHAPTER XXII—Continued.
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The day we were transferred to the regular prison barracks four hundred Russians and Belgians were buried. Most of them had died from cholera, typhoid and inoculations. We heard from the prisoners there before us that the Germans had come through the camps with word that there was an epidemic of black typhus and cholera and that the only thing for the men to do was to take the serum treatment to avoid catching these diseases. Most of the four hundred men had died from the inoculations. They had taken the Germans' word, had been inoculated and had died within nine hours. Which shows how foolish it is to believe a German. None of us had any doubt but what the serum was poisonous.

The second day that we were in the regular camp the Germans strung barbed wire all around our barracks. They told us we had a case of black typhus among us. This was nothing more nor less than a bluff, for not one of us had typhus, but they put up the wire, nevertheless, and we were not allowed to go out.

One day when I was loafing around our barracks door and not having anything particularly important to do, I packed a nice hard snowball and landed it neatly behind the ear of a little sentry not far away. When he looked around he did not blow his whistle but began hunting for the thrower. This was strange in a German sentry and I thought he must be pretty good stuff. When he looked around, however, all he saw was a man staggering around as if he were drunk. The man was the one who had done the throwing, all right, but the sentry could not be sure of it, for surely no man would stay out in the open and invite accidents like that. But still, who had done it?

So I just kept staggering around, and the sentry came up to me and looked me over pretty hard. Then I thought for the first time that things might go hard on me, but I figured that if I quit the play acting it would be all over. So I staggered right up to the sentry and looked at him drunkenly, expecting every moment to get one from the bayonet.

But he was so surprised that all he could do was stare. So I stared back, pretending that I saw two of him, and otherwise acting foolish. Then I guess he realized for the first time that the chances of anybody being drunk in that camp were small—at least for the prisoners. He was rubbing his ear all the time, but finally the thought seeped through the ivory and he began to laugh. I laughed, too, and the first thing you know he had me doing it again—that is, the imitation. One snowball was enough, I figured.

I used to talk to him quite often after that. We had no particular love for each other, but he was gamer than the other sentries, and he did not call me schweinhund every time he saw me, so we got on very well together. His name must have been Schwartz, I guess, but it sounded like "Swa'ts" to me, so Swatts he was, and I was "Chink" to him, as everybody else called me that.

One day he asked me if I could speak French, and I said yes. Italian; yes. Russian; yes. No matter what language he might have mentioned I would have said yes, because I could smell something in the wind, and I was curious. Then he told me that if I went to the hospital and worked there, I might get better meals and would not have to go so far for them, and that my knowing all the languages I said I did would help me a great ways toward getting the job.

Evidently he had been told to get a man for the place, because he appointed me to it then and there. He put me to work right away. We went over to one of the barracks, where a case of sickness had been reported, and found that the invalid was a big Barbadoes negro named Jim, a fireman from the Voltaire. At one time Jim must have weighed 250 pounds, but by this time he was about two pounds lighter than a straw hat, but still black and full of pep. Light as he was, I was no "white hope," and it was all I could do to carry him to the hospital. Swatts kept right along behind me, and every time I would stop to rest, he would poke me with a broom—the only broom I saw in Germany—and laugh and point to his ear.

Then I thought it was a frame-up and that he was getting even with me, but I was in for it then, and the best I could do was to go through with it. But I was all in when we reached the hospital. The first thing I saw when we got in the door was another negro, also from Barbadoes, and as tall and thin as Jim had once been short and fat. This black boy and I made a great team, but I never knew what his name was. I always called him Kate, because night and day he was whistling the old song, "Kate, Kate, Meet Me at the Garden Gate," or words to that effect. I have waked up many a night and heard that whistle just about at the same place as when I had fallen asleep. It would not have been so bad if he had known all of it.

I took Swatts' broom and cleaned up, and then asked where the coal or wood was. This got a great laugh. It was quite humorous to the men who had shivered there for weeks, maybe, but to me it was about as funny as a cry for help. I got wood though, before I had been there long.

There was a great big cupboard that looked more like a small house, built against the wall of the hospital barracks in one corner of the room, and not far from the stove. Kate was the only patient able to be on his feet, so I thought he would have to be my chief cook and bottle washer for a while; and, besides, there was something about him that made him look pretty valuable. I had not recognized his whistling yet, so Slim looked to be the right name for him.

"Slim, what's that big cupboard for?"

"How'd I know? Nuthin' in it."

"Slim, that would make a fine box for coal or wood, wouldn't it?"

"Um. Whar de coal an' wood?"

"I'm going out and take observations, Slim. Take the wheel while I'm gone, and keep your eye peeled for U-boats." So I sneaked out the door and began looking around.

If you look at the sketch I have made, it will not take you long to see that next to us was a vacated Russian barracks. And it did not take me much longer to see it, too. Back to the hospital and Slim.

"Slim, what barracks are next to us?"

"Russian burrucks, only dey ain't dere now. Been sick."

"And you mean to tell me you don't know where to get wood?"

"Sick men been in dem burrucks."

"Sick men here, aren't there? Let's go."

That did the trick. The black boy would watch from the hospital windows until he saw the coast was clear, then we would slip into the barracks next door, and he would watch again. When there was no sentry near enough to hear us, crash! and out would come a dividing board from the bunks. When we had an armful apiece, and had broken them up to the right lengths, all we needed was a little more watching, and then back to the hospital and the big cupboard. Later on, our men told me they used to watch the smoke that poured from the hospital chimney all the time and wonder where on earth we got the wood.

We got the same kind of food in the hospital that was served in the other barracks, and I would not have had any more than I used to, except that sometimes some of the twenty-six patients could not eat their share, and then, of course, it was mine. One day, though, we all had extra rations.

Two Russian doctors came to visit us each day, and once they were foolish enough, or kind enough, to ask if we had received our rations—we had received them earlier than usual and they were finished at the time. Of course, I said no, so they ordered the Russian in the kitchen to deliver twenty-eight rations to us, which was not quite three loaves of bread. We were that much ahead that day, but it would not work when I tried the trick again.

One day a German doctor came to the hospital barracks. He would not touch anything while he was there—not even open the door. All of the patients had little cards attached to their beds—charts of their condition. When the German wanted to see these charts the Russian doctors had to hold them for him.

I was having a great time at the hospital, wrecking the barracks next door each day for wood, along with Kate, and getting a little more food sometimes, and was always nice and warm. I thought myself quite a pet. Compared to what I had been up against, it seemed like real comfort. But the more food I got, the more I wanted. And it was food that brought me down, after all.

Across from us was a barracks in which there were English officers, and somehow it seemed to me that they must have had a drag. Every once in a while I saw what looked like vegetables and bags of something that was a dead ringer for brown flour. So I told Slim, or Kate, as I was calling him by then, and with him on guard, I sneaked out.

After two or three false starts, I got over our barbed wire and their barbed wire, and in through a window.

There I saw carrots! And graham flour!

I took all I could carry, to divide up with Kate, and then started eating, so as not to waste anything. It was certainly some feast—the only thing besides mud bread and barley coffee and "shadow" soup that I had to eat in Germany. Then I started back to the hospital. I got over their barbed wire all right, and Kate gave me the go-ahead for our entanglements, but just as I was going over them a sentry nabbed me. At first I thought Kate had turned traitor, because we had had a little argument a short time before.

But later on I figured that he would not have done a trick like that, and besides, he knew I was bringing him something to eat. So the sentry must have sneaked up without Kate seeing him. Who got the carrots and graham flour that I was carrying I do not know. The sentries booted me all the way back to my old barracks.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Despair—and Freedom.

While I was working at the hospital conditions at my old barracks had been getting worse and worse. Very few of the men were absolutely right in the head, I guess, and almost all had given up hope of ever getting out alive. Though they put up a good front to the Huns, they really did not care a great deal what happened to them. The only thing to think about was the minute they were living in.

The day I came back two Englishmen, who had suddenly gone mad, commenced to fight each other. It was the most terrible fight I have ever seen. It was some time before the rest of us could make them quit, because at first we did not know they were crazy. When we had them down, however, they were scratched and bitten and pounded from head to foot. Both of them bled from the nose all that night, and toward morning one of them became sane for a few minutes and then died. The other was taken away by the Germans, still crazy.

Another time an Australian came into our barracks and very seriously told us that he had a drag with the German officers and that he had been to dinner with them, and had had turkey, potatoes, coffee, butter, eggs, sugar in his coffee, and all the luxuries you could think of. We just sat and stared at him. It seemed impossible that any of our own men would have the gall to torture us like that, and yet we could not possibly believe that it had really happened. Finally, one fellow could not stand it any longer. He was nothing but skin and bones,

One Man Would Trade His Whole Ration for the Next Day for Half a Ration Today.

but he grabbed a dividing board and there were just two wallops: the board hit the Australian's head and the head hit the floor. Then half a dozen more pounced onto him and gave him a real licking. When he came to he had forgotten all about the wonderful dinner he did not have.

Not long after this the Russian doctors proved to the Germans that there was no black typhus in our barracks and we were allowed the freedom of the camp except that we could not visit the Russian barracks. That was no hardship to me nor to the rest of us, except one chap from the Cambrian Range, who had a special pal among the Russians that he wanted to see. And, of course, when it was verboten, he wanted to see him all the more.

A day or two after the order I was standing outside the barracks door when I saw this fellow come out with a dividing board in his hand. I thought he was going to smash somebody with it, so I stood by. But he stooped over and jammed one end of the board against the threshold of the door, scratched the ground with the farther end of the board and measured again. He kept this up, length by length, in the direction of the Russian barracks. The sentry in the yard stopped and stared at him, but the fellow kept right on, paying no attention to anybody. Pretty soon he was right by the sentry's feet and I thought any minute the sentry would give him the butt, but he just stared a while and let him pass. That lad measured the whole distance to the Russian barracks, went inside, stayed a while and calmly strolled back with the board under his arm. When he reached our barracks again he told us he had found a vino mine. What he had found was something not so unusual—a boneheaded German.

There was a lot of bamboo near the Russian barracks and the Russians made baskets out of it and turned them in to the Germans. For this they got all the good jobs in the kitchen and had a fine chance to get more to eat. But they were treated like dogs—that is, all except the few Cossacks that were in the bunch. The Huns knew that a Cossack never forgets and will get revenge for the slightest mistreatment, even if it means his death. I have seen sentries turn aside from the beat they were walking and get out of the way when they saw a Cossack coming. There were very few Cossacks there, however. I do not think they let themselves get captured very often.

We had roll call every morning, of course, and were always mustered in front of our barracks, the middle of the line being right at the barracks door. Sometimes when the cold got too much for them, the men nearest the door would duck into the barracks. As they left the ranks the other men would close up and this kept the line even, with the center still opposite the barracks door. Finally almost all of the men would be in the barracks and by the time the roll was over not one remained outside. This seemed to peeve the German officers a great deal, but they did not punish us for it until we had been doing it for some time.

For several days I had noticed that someone else answered for two men who had disappeared; at least I had not seen them for some time. I did not think much about it, or ask any questions, and I did not hear anyone else talk about it, but I was pretty sure the two men, a Russian and a Britisher, had escaped. But they were marked present at roll call and all accounted for. Everything went along very well until one day when the name "Fontaine" got by without being answered. Fontaine was a French fireman from the Cambrian Range and that was the first time he had not been present. We saw what was coming and we began to get pretty sore at Fontaine for not telling us, so we could answer for him and keep the escape covered.

The minute they found our count one short they blew the whistles and a squad of sentries came up as an extra guard. They counted us again, but by sneaking back of the line and closing up again we made the count all right except for one man—Fontaine. We would have tried to cover up for him, except that they had already discovered his absence. Now, we thought, they will nab Fontaine but will not discover the escape of the others.

But evidently they suspected something, for soon they brought over a petty officer from H. M. S. Nomad, who had not been with us before, and forced him to call the roll from the mustering papers, while they watched the men as they answered. Then they discovered that two more besides Fontaine were missing and began to search for them.

The other two spoke German and had been missing for at least three days and, I think, had escaped by this time. They were not returned while I was at Brandenburg.

This was about 7 a. m. They drilled us down to the little lake, where the cold was much greater, and kept us there until 5 p. m., without food or drink. At about eight that morning they found Fontaine in a French barracks and kicked him all the way to the lake where we were.

All day long we stood there, falling one by one and getting kicked or beaten each time until we dragged ourselves up again. Two or three died—I do not know the exact number. But we had enough strength, when ordered back to the barracks, to kick Fontaine ahead of us all the way. We did not get anything to eat until seven the next morning—twenty-four hours without food and water, ten of which were spent in the snow without any protection from the cold and wind. No wonder we kicked Fontaine for bringing this punishment on us and endangering the two who had escaped—he had simply strolled over to the French barracks and forgot to return.

Now, the food received was just about enough to keep us alive. I suppose, with true kultur, the Huns had figured out just how much it would take to keep a man on this side of the starvation line and gave us that much and no more. So we were always famished—always hungrier than you probably ever have been. But sometimes when we were ravenously hungry and could not hold out any longer we would trade rations.

One man would trade his whole ration for the next day for a half ration today. That is, if you were so hungry that you thought you could not last out the day on your regular share, you would tell someone else that if he gave you half his share today you would give him all of yours tomorrow. If he was a gambler he would take you up. That is, he would gamble on his being alive tomorrow, not on your keeping your word. He knew you would come across with your ration the next day, and like as not, if you tried to keep it from him, he would kill you, and nobody would blame him.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Optimistic Thought.

Observe thyself as thy greatest enemy would do; so shalt thou be thy greatest friend.

Temperance Notes

(Conducted by the National Woman's Christian Temperance Union.)

STRONG DRINK IS BARRED

From the vicinity of the coal mines,
From the vicinity of the shipyards,
From the vicinity of the munition plants,
From the vicinity of the steel plants,
From the vicinity of the war training camps,
From the vicinity of the army on the battlefield,
From the vicinity of all war work plants,
From the vicinity of the business districts,
From the vicinty of the resident districts,
From the vicinity of the factory districts,
From the vicinity of the public schools,
From the vicinity of the Christian churches.

WHERE SHALL IT GO?

It is set upon by the food administration,
It is condemned by the fuel administration,
It is debarred by the railroad administration.
It is prohibited by the navy department,
It is excluded from the army department,
It is restricted by the agricultural department,
It is pronounced illegal by the judicial department.

One by one the states of the Union are eliminating it.—Western Christian Advocate.

GOOD ENOUGH TO PASS ON.

These suggestions are offered by the New York Sun:

We have not the means of verifying the estimate of the brewers that 10,000 saloons in this city go out of business because of the executive ban on beer, but the figure is round and fascinating and suggestive.

Ten thousand bartenders are welcome in essential industry, if not in the army.

Ten thousand hardwood bars could be turned into gun stocks, ship's furniture and peace conference tables.

Ten thousand sets of mirrors, placed in the cantonments, would add to the joy of the man putting on his first suit of olive drab.

Ten thousand brass footrails would be received by the shell factories with loud cheers.

Ten thousand groups of "private stock" bottles could be used as ketchup containers.

Ten thousand bungstarters could be adapted to shipyard use for the driving home of wooden keys. One of these interesting weapons might be sent to the Historical society.

Then thousand slates, after careful washing, could be used in schools.

Ten thousand vacated saloons—what is the increased value, in money alone, of the buildings in which they nestled?

AS TO HOME MANUFACTURE.

Replying to the contention of the liquorites that with nation-wide prohibition private stills and kitchen barrooms will spring up all over the land, the National Advocate very wisely and pertinently says:

"Proven facts as to moonshine whisky making, and the effects of it, do not justify the public operation of distilleries and breweries. A private still to every square mile of Southern territory could not be so bad for this country as one public brewery in every county, under a law of the nation approving it and sharing its profits. Evil that is banned by law remains a thing of rebellious purpose, but it can never be so disastrous to the life of a people as an evil made lawful under the statute, and constantly corroding the character of men, the purity of their legislation, the strength of their common government."

BEER CRIMINOLOGY.

A woman physician, Dr. Mary F. Cushman, of Maine, writes as follows:

"If anything has ever demonstrated the evil of beer drinking, it is surely the present war. Years ago, when specializing in mental and nervous diseases, I was taught that alienists had proved the crimes for which distilled liquors were responsible, are crimes of passion unpremeditated, and often a horror to the perpetrator when he recovers from the effects of his drink. The habitual use of malt liquors, however so affects the moral sense as to lead to deliberate crimes, carefully planned, coolly executed, without compunction or remorse. Germany, the great beer-drinking nation, has simply illustrated this in a war conducted along the above lines of beer criminology. What does our nation want of the drink that makes men capable of the atrocities perpetrated by Germany?"

COAL PRODUCTION REDUCED BY DRINK.

In the mines of the Pittsburgh Vein Operators' Association of Ohio there was a loss of 30,000 tons in coal production on July 5 caused by liquor drinking on the Fourth of July.

The University of California has issued a bulletin which states that the wine and table grapes of California, now worth $4,000,000, would be worth $8,000,000 if converted into grape sirup.—Patriotic Phalanx.

Restaurant Humor.

"This fish is very rich."

"Yes, it is well supplied with bones."—Boston Transcript.

Make the best of the present—if you are unable to exchange it for anything better.

It is a wise old saw that cuts with its wisdom teeth.